



## Brandy Creek Falls



Brandy Creek Falls

### TRAIL HEAD DIRECTIONS

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center, drive south on Kennedy Memorial Drive towards Whiskeytown Dam. The road forks. Continue on the right fork, crossing over the dam. The paved road winds around the lake to the Brandy Creek Beach area. Turn left on Shasta Bally Road (turns into a dirt road) driving up approximately 2.5 miles toward Sheep Camp. Turn left at the junction of the road to Sheep Camp/Shasta Bally and the road to the Brandy Creek Falls trailhead.

After approximately 0.75 miles, look to the right for a small parking area.

The trailhead is up the road, look for the sign, approximately 150 feet.

### TRAIL DESCRIPTION

This is a moderately steep trail leading uphill to the base of Brandy Creek Falls. The trail is mostly an old logging road.

### FEATURES

- 1.5 miles one way; moderate difficulty
- Lovely fern dells and a series of waterfalls
- Elevation 2000 to 2500 feet
- Creek crossings
- Connects to Rich Gulch Trail

Approximately 0.5 miles into the hike you will cross one of two small creeks on the trail. The natural debris of large boulders and logs found at the creek crossing came from a dramatic debris flow that came thundering down the mountain during the winter of 1997.

Approximately 0.75 miles into the hike is the trail for Rich Gulch, to the left. Pass this trail to reach the falls. From this point the trail narrows, horses and bicycles are not recommended.

The Brandy Creek trail takes the hiker into moist fern dells and along steep trail edges. The trail looks down into the dense second growth forest typical of this section of the park. From the first cascade at the lower falls, the trail enters a narrow box canyon. Beautiful pools connected by fast moving riffles and cascades across large slabs of bedrock guide the hiker up to the falls. Use the foot holds chiseled out of the rock and railings to assist the climb past five pools and cascades to the falls. In the summer, the falls split in the middle, creating two falls that flow on either side of this 50 foot high waterfall. The upper chamber of the waterfall is like being in one of nature's chapels.



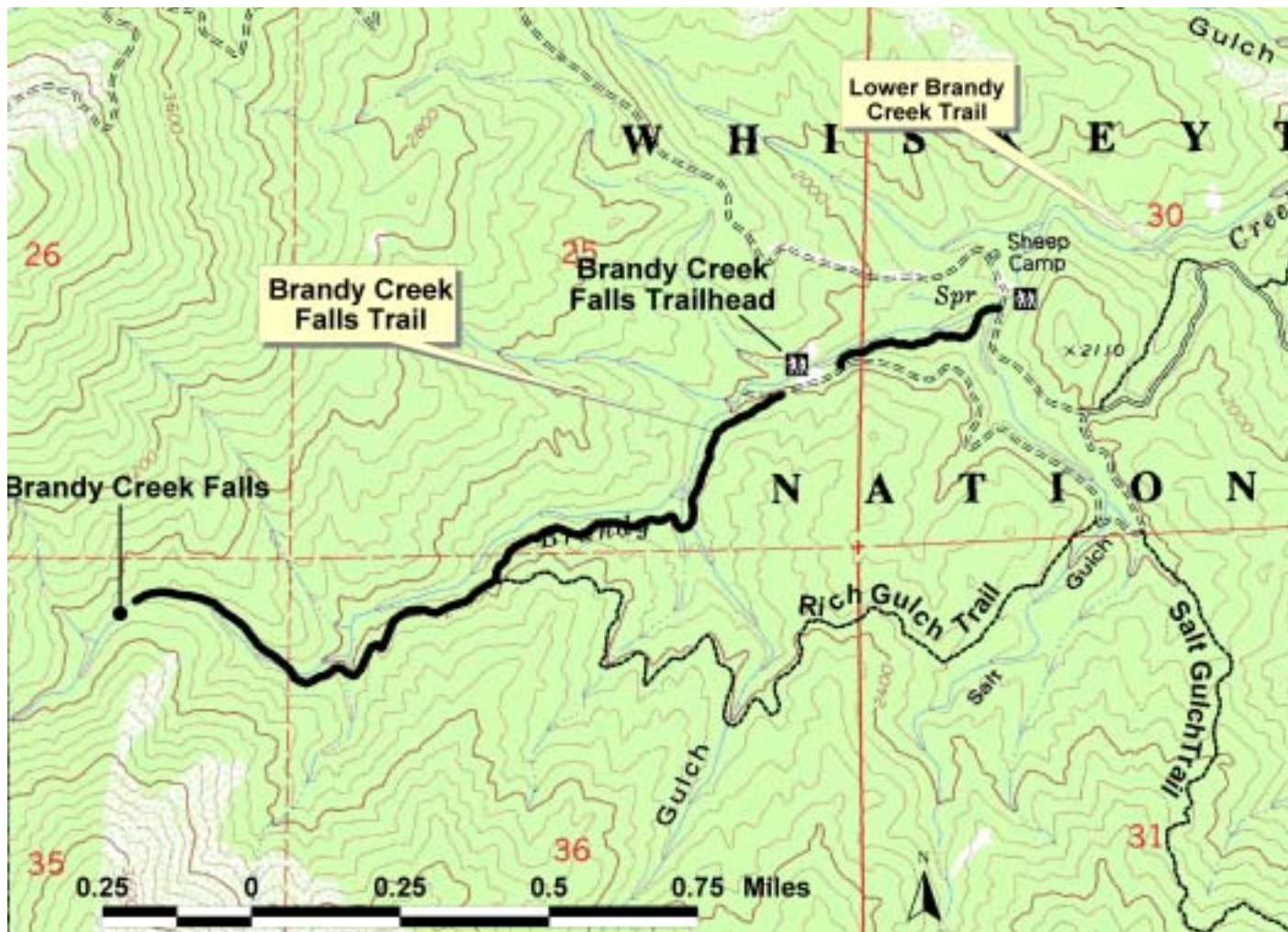
Look for the American dipper and great blue herons feeding on small fish and insects near the falls.

### FLORA

The trail is populated with large ponderosa pines, black oaks, canyon live oaks, incense cedars, big leaf maples, and Douglas firs. The understory consists of dogwoods, California pipevines, snowberries, and bracken and sword ferns. tanoaks, with their light gray splotchy trunks, are especially abundant on this trail. Look for an intricate curled feathery moss called *Dendroalsia abietina* that grows on some of the tree trunks. It is partial to the hardwoods (oaks and maples) and is seldom seen on conifers. At the first creek vista look for gray and white layered rocks across the stream. These are called amphibolite (see geology section). An unusually large red-barked madrone tree graces the near bank.



Tanoak leaves



## GEOLOGY

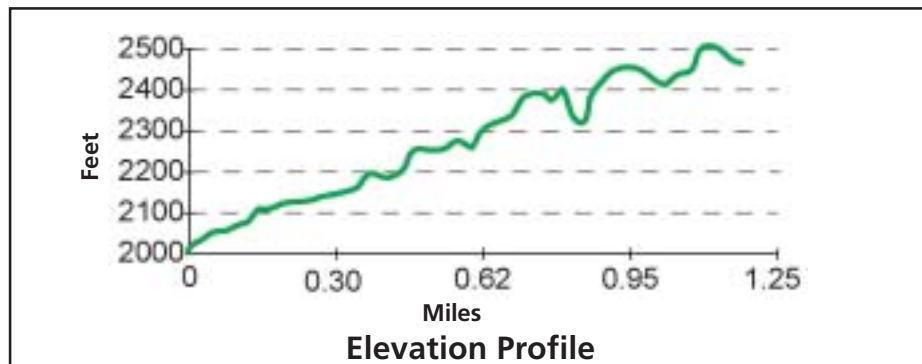
About 400 million years ago a magma chamber under the Pacific tectonic plate welled up and began expelling hot rock into the seabed covering it. Over time, the mounded basalt rose above the surface and created a string of islands. In the next 10-30 million years the Pacific plate collided with and partly slipped under the North American continental plate parking this island arc against the mainland. Since then it has undergone many compressive folds and fractures but this is the greatly simplified story of

the base rock of the Brandy Creek Trail. The rock is called Copley Greenstone and one theory holds that the remnant of its parent magma chamber is the Mule Mountain stock.

Then, some 250 million years later, after additional island arcs were similarly shoved against the continental plate, another magma chamber pushed through the greenstone. This was Shasta Bally Batholith, whose heat and pressure baked some of the native rock into colorful amphibolite, visible in places

along the trail. Periodically debris flows of boulders and mud wash down from Shasta Bally spottily covering the surrounding greenstone. Batholith rock contains high levels of biotite (mica) and easily fractures into decomposed granite (DG) covering the trail in many places. Through this mixed bed of Bally debris and greenstone cuts Brandy Creek.

The base rock of Brandy Creek is Copley Greenstone, primarily basalt formed by shallow underwater volcanism about 400 million years ago.



## SAFETY

Steep slopes and edges are found in numerous locations along the trail. Please keep children from the steep edges and assist children climbing up the trail and across slippery rocks. Do not try to cross Brandy Creek above any of the cascades unless aided by one of the two footbridges. Stay on the trail's path at all times.